

STATEMENT OF
TIMOTHY M. TETZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NEVADA OFFICE OF VETERAN SERVICES
TO THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND MINING
NEVADA STATE LEGISLATURE
ON
ASSEMBLY BILL 105

February 28, 2007

Chairman Claborn and members of the Committee:

My name is Tim Tetz. I am the Executive Director of the Nevada Office of Veteran Services. I am here testifying in favor of Assembly Bill 105. Extending hunting and fishing licenses at a reduced rate to the National Guard members may not seem a likely issue for the Office of Veterans Services. However, we are tasked with caring for Nevada's veterans and military members and like our military's leadership, we make little distinction between the National Guard and other military services. I hope your committee will see the same fact and honor the dedication of these Guardsmen through passage of AB105.

The National Guard's defense of our nation's freedoms has a long but often overlooked past. Army veterans don't like to admit the original militia of Lexington and Concord would be the equivalent of our National Guard. General Washington resigned his position within the National Guard to serve as our Commanding General during the Revolutionary War. In the infancy of our nation, when our forefathers found it unpalatable to support an Army, the idea of local militia filled with neighbors and friends became a unique method to protect a young country.

Their role and place within the fabric of our society continues today. For it is the National Guard serving to protect our borders. It is the National Guard who patrols the Las Vegas strip each New Year. It is the National Guard called to save our state from the ravages of fire and floods. Our National Guard helps interdict drugs, find lost hikers, and educate our children on the duties of serving one's country. Like our past, the Nevada National Guardsman is your neighbor, your co-worker, or perhaps your close friend.

Historically, these Guardsman were labeled "weekend warriors." Not always a positive way to view their contributions, many active duty military members saw a Guardsman's service of one weekend a month and two weeks a year as a half effort; something less than that of the traditional American soldier who puts the uniform on every day of the year. To those who have that attitude, I would urge you to discover today's National Guard. For since September 11th, their role and mission have dramatically changed.

Our Nevada National Guardsman is serving the same mission as our active duty service members. Ask a returning veteran from Afghanistan or Iraq the operational responsibilities of the Guardsman and the active duty soldier and you'll find no distinction. They live together, serve together, and unfortunately die side by side with their active duty counterparts. Warrant Officer Flynn, Sergeant Stewart, and Specialist Cometa are three such Nevada National Guardsman who gave their lives for our country. Our enemies don't realize the difference so why should we distinguish a Guardsman from active duty military member?

There are currently 3,500 Nevadans serving in our National Guard; 1,100 are serving within the Air National Guard and 2,400 serving within the Army National Guard. Today, approximately 300 members of the Nevada National Guard are serving our country in the Global War on Terror. Since September 11th, 1,400 have served our country's call to arms. In an era of reduced troop strength, our military leadership realized the only option they had in supporting the mission was to draw upon the National Guardsman. This is a different role for the National Guard, a role beyond that of "weekend warrior." A role taking them away from home for sometimes a year. The same role as our active duty servicemembers.

Andrew Watson is a 1994 graduate of Carson High School. In college, he joined the ROTC program and used the benefits to obtain further education. Proud to serve his country, he was a member of the Army during a year-long rotation to Iraq two years ago. During those unimaginable times of stress, those hours of boredom, and those days of yearning away from his family he escaped through two thoughts. The love of his family and small children at home was of course in the forefront of his mind. But he had another longing. Not for McDonalds, softball games, or anything else American. Major Watson wanted to return to the streams and rivers of his youth. Return and learn the fine art of fly-fishing here in Nevada.

Last year, 186 of the nearly 20,000 hunting licenses issued were to active duty service members. Of the more than 77,000 fishing licenses issued, 470 were issued to Nevada service members. 1 in every 20 residents of Nevada held a fishing or hunting license. If we use similar ratios and extend this number to the Nevada National Guard, perhaps only 125 would use a reduced fee license. The number and overall cost is almost inconsequential and yet means so much.

However, like the Department of Wildlife, I understand the difficulty in paying for operations through limited budgets. However, the responsibility of supporting our troops, whether National Guard or active duty, is a task we must all perform. It is a duty our cities, counties, and every agency should view as our most sacred obligation. On behalf of the Office of Veterans Services, the veteran service organizations and all of Nevada's veterans and veteran advocates, I urge you to forget the past and support the Nevada National Guard for their contributions today and in the future. Please pass AB105 for Nevada's citizen soldiers . . . the Nevada National Guard.